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SUBJECT: LOCAL REACTION TO DEPUTY SECRETARY'S CSIS  
ADDRESS

1. On 2/14 Deputy Secretary Armitage made major policy remarks regarding "Sri Lanka: Prospects for Peace" while speaking at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. The challenge for the GSL and the LTTE, Armitage said, is to create "tangible signs of progress...." He called on both parties to accept pluralism within Sri Lankan society and to protect the human rights of all Sri Lankiness, and he noted that the USG had pledged \$8 million in humanitarian support for Sri Lanka and \$1 million for defining.

2. The Deputy Secretary's remarks resonated well in weekend news coverage and continued to reverberate into the week. The electronic media, radio and TV, government-owned and independent, began using post distributed materials in their 2/16 broadcasts. The English weekenders carried coverage on 2/16 under headlines such as "U.S. holds out prize to tigers" (SUNDAY ISLAND, opposition English weekly), "If Tigers renounce violence ... U.S. prepared to consider lifting ban on LTTE" (SUNDAY LEADER, pro-UNP English weekly), "U.S. tells LTTE to prove commitment to peace" (SUNDAY OBSERVER, government-owned English weekly), and "No two armies or two navies in united Lanka, Armitage tells LTTE" (SUNDAY TIMES, independent English weekly). Although most headlines admonished the LTTE, coverage itself was more balanced. For example the OBSERVER wrote: "Armitage has urged the LTTE to publicly and unequivocally renounce terrorism and prove that its days of violence are over.... [He] further said that no individual, no single political party could carry the burden of the peace process," which required "concerted effort by the President, the Prime Minister and the other parties."

3. On Sunday the government-owned Sinhala weekly, SILUMINA, carried the story under the misleading headline "If LTTE puts a complete stop to terrorist activities they will be off America's list of banned organizations." The Tamil press was also active. "Government and Tigers may have to make difficult decisions" and "Armitage stresses that both parties should continue to observe cease fire" said the SUNDAY THINAKURAL (independent Tamil weekly). "PM and President should work together for the progress of peace efforts" said the SUNDAY VIRAKESARI (independent Tamil weekly). And the government owned Tamil daily, THINAKARAN, said that "America is studying the possibilities of the deproscription."

4. On Monday (2/17) the Sinhala press weighed in more heavily. DIVAINA (opposition Sinhala daily) reproduced the Embassy's press materials from 2/15. DINAMINA (government-owned Sinhala daily) gave the story front-page coverage under the headline "America's deputy state secretary pledges fullest support for a permanent solution." And LANKADEEPA (independent Sinhala daily) reproduced the "No two armies or two navies" coverage that had appeared in its sister weekend, the SUNDAY TIMES.

5. Monday saw the first of five editorial replies to Armitage's remarks. Under the headline "The LTTE and the U.S. ban" the ISLAND complained that "statements such as 'The Tigers need to honour the restrictions and conditions [of] the ceasefire,' though welcome, are inadequate." They are also confusing, said the ISLAND, given the USG's larger war on terrorism. A more balanced editorial in Monday's DAILY NEWS, "Peace and world opinion," picked up on the Deputy Secretary's remarks about "mov[ing the LTTE] beyond the terror tactics of the past": "These observations serve to remind us that ... this is not an exercise where the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE can engage in a manner where international norms and standards can be ignored.... The Tigers have emerged from the ... jungles to occupy a place on the world stage because they have made a public commitment to peace. But their actions on the ground must match their words. They have to realize that the world -- and indeed the rest of Sri Lanka -- needs to see a genuine transformation of the LTTE if their acceptance into the world community is to be guaranteed." And the MIRROR (independent English daily), under the headline "Timely warning," wrote: Sri Lankans "should certainly be grateful to the U.S. for telling the LTTE in clear precise terms what they should do to carry forward the ongoing peace process to a successful conclusion."

16. Monday also saw the appearance of two Sinhala editorials. Under the headline "Making the Peace effort happen -- Both parties responsible," the government-owned DINAMINA worried about "a few Sinhalese and Tamils who await the collapse of the peace process." And LANKADEEPA (independent Sinhala daily) said that "Armitage's statement very clearly defines the real situation required for permanent peace in the country.... However, it is evident that this ideal situation does not prevail.... Although a national peace day has been declared and the MOU is one year old, many unfortunate incidents in the north have led the government to put the forces on alert.... It is obvious that both parties should work hard for peace. Any violation by either party is a betrayal, but recent incidents show that the Tigers need to make more sacrifices...."

17. The full text of the Deputy Secretary's remarks, as downloaded from the Washington File, appeared in the DAILY NEWS, the SUNDAY ISLAND, and the SUNDAY OBSERVER.

18. Full texts of English-medium editorials follow.

8.a "Timely Warning," DAILY MIRROR (independent English daily)

Whatever the misgivings and objections Sri Lankans, in common with other peace-loving peoples throughout the world have against the United States Government's war preparations to punish Iraq, they should certainly be grateful to the US for telling the LTTE in clear precise terms what they should do to carry forward the ongoing peace process to a successful conclusion.

Deputy Secretary of State of the US Government, Richard Armitage speaking to a gathering at the center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington has said that the LTTE must publicly and unequivocally renounce terrorism and prove that its days of violence are over. He has added that the US will never accept the tactics of terror regardless of any legitimate Tamil aspirations. Armitage has not failed to hold out hope for the LTTE in return for its renunciation of violence. He has said that if the LTTE can move beyond the terror tactics of the past and make a convincing case through its conduct and its actual actions that it is committed to a political solution and to peace, the US will consider removing the LTTE from the list of terrorist organizations.

This exhortation from the US, comes at a time when certain major incidents and minor skirmishes between the army and LTTE cadres show a trend of escalating, indicating a tendency to destabilize the peace process, fears about which even Japan's peace envoy, Yasushi Akashi has expressed. Although the worst fears of a resumption of war has so far been averted mainly because of the sound conflict-resolution mechanism built into the process and the effectiveness of the international safety net that restrains the LTTE from indulging in crime and violence as they did before, threats to the process continue. That is why the exercise of preserving the peace process is compared to a walk on a tight rope which is pulled in two directions. On one side is the LTTE torn between their dream of creating their Eelam and the compulsions and pressures exerted by external forces and on the other side by those opposed to giving any concession to the Tamil community and also persons supporting the peace process, but having suspicions and misgivings about the LTTE's commitment to peace through a negotiated settlement.

The task is, therefore, onerous and as Armitage points out, no individual or single party could carry the burden of the peace process and that it should really be a concerted effort by the President, the Prime Minister and the other parties. Armitage gives due credit to President Kumaratunga for her peace plan of 1995 which, he says, was an important precursor to the progress that is being made today, while commending the Wickremesinghe Government for continuing to take bold steps in the direction of peace.

However, it is the lack of sustained cooperation between the President representing the main partner in the PA and the Prime Minister representing the UNP, that has now emerged as a major obstacle to forging an acceptable formula for the settlement of the national issue. President Kumaratunga who oscillates between high statesmanship and low party politics and confuses the public seem to contribute more than anyone else to put the peace process in great jeopardy.

It is, however, creditable that while her approach oscillates between extremes like a pendulum, her major PA partners, the LSSP and CP are maintaining their consistent approach. Ironically redoubtable peace propagandists of yesteryear who paraded street dramas and organized Sudu Nelum shows are today conspicuously absent from the scene or supporting the hardliners on the approach to peace.

This indeed is nothing but the continued display of naked hypocrisy and political opportunism that pushed this country to the present impasse. The LTTE, at least now, should see the realities of the present situation and quickly adjust themselves to pursuing the democratic path in which there is no room for violence and suppression of the rights of others living in the areas which they have brought under their control by force and terrorism. Meanwhile, the government should also make every effort to get the opposition parties more actively involved in the peace process because without their cooperation the expected constitutional reforms for power sharing will remain unrealized. And the inevitable result of the failure will be to push the nation to the jaws of war once again

8.B. "Peace and World Opinion," DAILY NEWS (government owned daily)

The comments on the Sri Lankan peace process made by the Deputy Secretary of State of the United States, Richard L. Armitage comes as no surprise to those who have watched the international community's attitude towards our tentative progress towards finding a long-term solution to the national question.

Armitage has called on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to make clear that it has renounced violence so that it can be freed of the proscription the U.S. has imposed on the organization. He also asked the Tigers to honour their pledge to end the recruitment of children into the ranks of its fighting forces and respect the democratic and human rights of all peoples living in the North and East.

These comments are consistent with what Armitage told the November Peace Support meeting held in Oslo in the presence of the LTTE's theoretician Anton Balasingham.

They are also in line with the international community's new resolve to act against terror in all forms.

The U.S. and other states, which have banned the LTTE, did not simply lift their proscription orders because the Sri Lankan state decided to temporarily lift its ban to engage the peace talks with the Tigers. They are awaiting concrete results, and proof that the Tigers have really changed their former ways before they can un-ban the organization.

Armitage in his recent remarks made in the U.S. has said that his country would consider lifting the ban when it is convinced the LTTE has "moved beyond the terror tactics of the past."

These observations serve to remind us that the peace process in Sri Lanka is not being conducted in isolation. This is not an exercise where the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE can engage in a manner where international norms and standards can be ignored.

The Lankan process is being closely monitored by friendly countries and on the way the parties to the conflict would have to satisfy the international community that the final result would lead to creating a stable, secure, pluralistic democracy in Sri Lanka.

In this context recent incidents in the North have been unfortunately responsible for raising tensions between the government forces and the LTTE.

The horrific incident in the seas of Delft where a standoff between the Navy and Tiger cadres ended with four LTTE men committing suicide in full view of the Ceasefire monitors was the most serious. The LTTE admitted it was their fault that the stand off ended in such a tragedy, but to this date has not offered a reasonable explanation as to why they were transporting an anti-aircraft weapon in a clandestine manner through government-controlled waters.

The second serious incident was the deliberate provocation of the security forces personnel at Manipay when LTTE cadres including some women created an incident that required the Police to disperse them using a riot squad.

The LTTE has also used this tension to pressure the Jaffna Municipality to defer the opening of the reconstructed library, which was to be a symbol of healing between North and South. An angry council resigned en-masse after the incident, alleging that they had been put "under severe pressure," by the LTTE.

These incidents are unfortunate and place a heavy strain on the progress towards peace.

The sad part is that the government and the LTTE have progressed well at the head table of the peace talks, but the commitments made at the negotiations and the spirit that the talks are being conducted in does not seem to have

percolated to the ground where tensions have risen.

It seems also to indicate that the LTTE cadres on the ground are still in a confrontational mode and are not geared for peace and accommodation.

This is what Armitage and other international observers of the peace process have been constrained to note in recent days.

The Tigers have emerged from the Vanni jungles to occupy a place on the world stage because they have made a public commitment to peace. But their actions on the ground must match their words.

They have to realize that the world -- and indeed the rest of Sri Lanka -- needs to see a genuine transformation of the LTTE if their acceptance into the world community is to be guaranteed.

8.C. "The LTTE and the U.S. ban," ISLAND (opposition daily)

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage has told a conference in Washington that if the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam moved beyond terror tactics and proved it was committed to peace, "the United States will certainly consider removing the LTTE from the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations."

"The LTTE," he has said, "is going to have to take a number of difficult steps to demonstrate that it remains committed to a political solution." He has -- going by what is reported of his speech -- stopped short of specifying what these 'difficult steps' are. These steps ought to be elaborated on by the U.S. now that it has evinced so keen an interest in Sri Lanka's conflict. Statements such as "The Tigers need to honour the restrictions and conditions that the ceasefire -- and future negotiations -- set on their arms supply," though welcome, are inadequate given the enthusiasm of the U.S.

Mr. Armitage has said, "The United States should be playing a role in concert with other nations, committing our human and financial resources to settling this conflict."

Having committed itself pro tanto, the U.S. should leave no room for ambiguity as to what it really expects of the LTTE in keeping with the U.S. strategy for battling terrorism, which according to President Bush's new National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, "requires direct and continuous action against terrorist organizations to initially disrupt them, over time degrade them, and ultimately to destroy them."

President Bush's position is: "The more frequently and relentlessly we strike the terrorists across all fronts, using all the tools of statecraft, the more effective we will be. The United States, with its unique ability to build partnerships and project power, will lead the fight against terrorist organizations of global reach. By striking constantly and ensuring that terrorists have no place to hide, we will compress their scope and reduce the capability of these organizations."

We are sad to have to say that this policy of the U.S. is not reflected in the modus operandi of the international community involved in Sri Lanka's conflict with the blessings of the U.S. in handling LTTE terrorists. The World Bank having delegates of terrorists at its meetings, foreign diplomats meeting and dining with wanted LTTE leaders etc. run counter to the U.S. strategy. In Oslo last December, Mr. Armitage himself was a participant at an aid group meeting held in support of the Sri Lanka government and the very LTTE proscribed in the U.S.!

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan government has gone to such an extent to appease the terrorists that it is now paying 'taxes' to the terrorists through government agencies like the CWE and the BMC. The terror leaders who masterminded devastating attacks on the country's only international airport less than two years ago are not only whisked in and out without Customs checks together with their baggage but also treated to parties at the airport and given VVIP chopper rides to and from their jungle hide-outs.

The LTTE enjoys all this without having budged an inch from its terror project. Last December in Oslo the LTTE had the courage, according to Reuters, to turn down a call by none other than Mr. Armitage himself, who is said to be holding out a prize to the Tigers, for it to eschew violence. Anton Balasingham reiterated this position in Berlin the other day.

Be that as it may, the U.S. banned the LTTE on its soil in the interest of its own national security and not that of Sri Lanka's. And it has every right to do whatever it

wishes to with the ban. The impact of deproscription of the LTTE in the U.S. on Sri Lanka will cause little concern to Washington in deciding when to lift the ban. The proteases, 'If the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam moved beyond terror tactics and proved it was committed to peace,' will then be conveniently dropped and the apodosis will just take effect. The same is true of Britain and other international dogooders.

The LTTE will be Sri Lanka's burden in the end. We have seen how India considered Sri Lanka's conflict as its burden in the 1980s and went to the extent of thrusting a solution on Colombo, which failed to work. Norway which was involved in the peace process in the 1994-95 period was nowhere to be seen after the LTTE blew the peace process sky high until the LTTE itself agreed to talk peace again in 2001.

This is the harsh reality that the government of Sri Lanka must not lose sight of in trying to resolve the conflict with the help of foreigners.

WILLS